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US pressure on drug-source nations grows

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When Colombia's chief drug-enforcement officer, Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, was assassinated last April, the Colombian government got what it wanted: a strong public mandate to act decisively to curtail that nation's illegal narcotics trade. With a key supporting role from the United States, the crackdown has produced the most significant achievement in drug enforcement this year.

But according to a comprehensive report on the international drug trade released recently by the State Department, Colombia's war on drugs may be the only silver lining in an otherwise dark cloud. Overall, the report says, the war on drugs is being lost.

The 250-page report is the second produced by the State Department to review illicit drug production worldwide and efforts to staunch the flow of illegal drugs into the US. According to the report, worldwide production of marijuana declined slightly last year, thanks to the efforts of Colombia. Production of opium, from which heroin is made, also dropped because of bad weather in Pakistan and Afghanistan. But overall, the State Department report paints the 1984 international drug picture in dark hues. Among the report's conclusions:

- Marijuana, coca (used to make cocaine), and opium crops were larger than ever before in most of the major drug-producing countries.

- Worldwide cocaine production rose by a dramatic 30 percent.

- More countries entered the international drug market. The major new producer is Ecuador. From a standing start, Ecuador will catapult into third place this year as a producer of coca.

- Drug abuse and drug-related terrorism continued to grow in drug-producing countries.

The report also notes that interdiction and eradication efforts have continued to founder because of overtaxed enforcement capability and because some governments themselves have become involved in the narcotics trade.

"The problem has grown to epidemic proportions," says one State Department official, commenting on the report. "Drug traffickers have so much financial power now that they can undermine social institutions and stubborn political systems. What's more, these guys are mean, and they will kill you."

The international drug trade has become the object of a big and growing US enforcement effort involving close to 40 federal agencies. A report released Tuesday by the

House Foreign Affairs Committee calls for new regional enforcement mechanisms as well, including the creation of a pan-American antidrug agency that would work closely with the US Central Intelligence Agency.

But the burgeoning trade in illegal narcotics also raises the question of possible diplomatic sanctions. Officials here ask whether the State Department's findings should be used as the basis for cutting off US aid.

The diplomatic dilemma is best illustrated by the case of Bolivia, which produces the raw material for about 50 percent of the cocaine entering the US and which the recent House report says has "the most lax enforcement record of any producer nation in the world."

Officials say there are political considerations as well. After 18 years under military rule, Bolivia has embarked on a fragile experiment in democratic government. To support it, the Reagan administration has called for \$10 million in new aid next year. "If we renege on this," says another department official, "we put Bolivia at risk — and right on the eve of national elections scheduled for June. Above all else, we have to give Bolivia a chance to continue on the path of democracy."

But there are indications that Congress may wish to make a test case of Bolivia — and perhaps other countries with poor narcotics enforcement records as well. "We need to link foreign aid to actual progress," says Sen. Paula Hawkins (R) of Florida, cosponsor of the Hawkins-Gilman Amendment. "Not to plans, not to goals, not to attitudes, but to actual progress. We won't accept less."

Senator Hawkins says she will have broad support for suspending aid to Bolivia when Congress takes up the administration's new foreign-aid requests this spring. Bolivia, she says, has "failed" the State Department's "report card." On the other hand, she applauds Colombia's drug-enforcement efforts as "valiant and brave," and says Pakistan's president, Muhammad Zia ul-Haq "deserves a peace medal" for a "magnificent job" in reducing Pakistan's opium production.

Senator Hawkins says Bolivia may not be the only test case of the new amendment. She says Mexico has continued to produce larger opium and marijuana crops and has done an inadequate job of protecting US drug-enforcement agents. Without reforms, she says of Mexico, Congress will "dock their pay."

"We strongly disagree with single-issue politics," says a State Department source. "Governments like Mexico or Colombia or Jamaica are important to us for many reasons. We have trade interests. Mexico and Colombia are part of the Contadora peace process. We can't just stop aid because of one issue."

But Senator Hawkins disagrees. She says the 96-to-0 vote for passage of the amendment in 1983 indicates Congress will make drug-enforcement progress a condition for future US aid.

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